

Professionally Immature

By
CMSgt Atticus C. Smith

Sometimes I'm completely amazed at the feedback I receive from Airmen, and wish I could smack some people after hearing it. Without fail, when speaking with ALS and NCOA students there are always several students who state their supervision told them "it's just a waste of time, you won't learn anything" or "just play the game then forget what they taught." Why are these comments made? It's because some people are professionally immature.

Maybe it's just easier for some people to say those things because they don't want the extra responsibility of challenging the Airmen upon graduation. Extra responsibility? That's right!

Frontline supervisors often determine whether the investment the Air Force made will provide a return. They're the ones that will determine if the leadership and management lessons taught will be effectively utilized. Some lessons, just to name a few, include: Narrative and Bullet Statement Writing, Human Relations, Behavior Analysis, Team Development, Discipline, Conflict Management, Counseling, Military Leadership, the Enlisted Evaluation System, Public Speaking and Problem Solving. Although Airmen studied the areas and proved they understood the concepts it doesn't make them experts. This is where supervisors come in.

So, supervisors...what will you do to ensure the graduates apply the lesson principles? How will you increase the responsibility of the Airmen? How will you challenge them? How will you develop their leadership and followership skills? How will you develop their public speaking and writing skills? I'm pleased to say a good portion of supervisors have plans in place; however, some don't, probably the same people who make the immature comments.

After Airmen complete a certain level of PME, they shouldn't resume the same old responsibilities. When Airmen are told "forget everything you learned while you were there...you're back in the real world now" or "the stuff they teach

doesn't apply here", the chances of them returning to the same routine is pretty good. Let's pause for a moment and examine the last comment...*the stuff they teach doesn't apply here*. Let's play around, let's replace the words '*the stuff they teach*' with some of the subject areas mentioned above. *Military leadership doesn't apply here. Discipline doesn't apply here. Counseling doesn't apply here. Team development doesn't apply here. The enlisted evaluation system doesn't apply here.*

I'm not sure about anyone else but I don't want to have a darn thing to do with a unit where those principles don't apply. The foundation of military service includes those areas and I'm sure there isn't a commander that would want to lead a unit where those skills aren't applied.

Some people may think that I'm advocating this due to being a Chief. That's not the case. I'm advocating the developmental education opportunities because I serve as a SNCO, a frontline supervisor, and a military professional. In the fulfillment of those roles, I utilize bits and pieces of lesson principles taught at PME schools nearly every day, and I've utilized these skills and principles well before sewing on Chief, well before SMSgt, well before MSgt. It's when I get the *opportunities* to use these skills that the skills become more refined.

We must ensure we give graduates the opportunities to *refine* their skills. Graduating from a PME course isn't a "*square filler*", it's a milestone. Better yet, it's a stepping stone to greater responsibility and bigger challenges, and the frontline supervisors should be opening those doors not making immature comments. The doors can also be opened by the graduates.

There are many avenues for graduates to open their own doors, often it's just a matter of breaking out of comfort zones. Take the lead on a squadron or base event; it's sure to refine team development and leadership skills. If someone's not abiding by policies or rules bring it to their attention, enforce the standards, it's sure to refine counseling skills. If public speaking is a challenge, volunteer to give a heritage brief at the next commander's call.

The investment our Air Force makes to develop the future generation of leaders is immense. Nowhere in this deliberate development cycle should people discount or downplay the opportunities. To those who do...please do the Air Force a favor

and professionally grow up.

Bring credit and honor to the United States Air Force and take care of each other in all your actions.

CMSgt Atticus C. Smith is the Command Chief at the 388th Fighter Wing, Hill AFB, UT. The views expressed here are solely those of the author and may not represent the policies of the US Air Force or the Department of Defense.